

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
HOLYOKE**

**INFORMANT: MARY MARCONI
INTERVIEWER: CHRIS HOWARD BAILEY
DATE: APRIL 26, 1988**

**B = CHRIS HOWARD BAILEY
M = MARY MARCONI**

SG-HO-T323 and SG-HO-T323

B: We're at the home of Mary McCarth-, Marconi, on Race Street in Holyoke, and we're talking to her about her memories of Ward 2, (M: 98) she's, for 298, (M: Race) Race, for the Shifting Gears Project, the changing meaning of work in Massachusetts, 1920-1980. Okay why don't we start Mrs. Marconi by you just, forget about that, telling me a little about you know when you were born, where and how you came to Holyoke.

M: My [unclear] someplace so you can uh (B: Yeah) get a p-, over there in the desk, (B: Uh huh) there's a big pair. (B: Okay) Then you can (- -) Give me the book, maybe I can mark it myself. And it's easier the (- -)

B: What? No you just tell me. (M: Yeah okay) You just tell me. You don't have to write it. Just tell me.

M: I born in Italy. (B: Um hm)

B: When?

M: 1893.

B: 1893. Okay that makes you [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: September 21.

B: So you're ninety. (M: Hm?) You're ninety years old.

M: Ninety-five almost.

B: Ninety-five years old.

M: [both talk; interviewer unclear] Almost. I'll be ninety-five in September.

B: Wow, that's terrific! Yeah. So how did you end up here then?

M: I had two brother. (B: Um hm) They call for me. And my brother, he had a little corner store. (B: Um hm) And he was working in a, a brickyard. He had nobody to take care of the grocery store. They was closed all day. So he had called me if I want to come. Yes and no. [interviewer chuckles] I was uh you know twenty-one years old uh, you had a little boyfriend, you didn't know what to do and (- -) [both laugh] So, I decide. My mother, she said, "You better go, Mary, because if you don't go, he's going to marry over there with some American people, and we never know, eh we never see him again." [both chuckle] So, my mother, she was very close to the family. (B: Um hm) So, she, she convinced me to come. (B: Hm)

B: Now when you said your brothers ha-a-a, had a little shop, what, wh-, in this area?

M: Right here. Two, two, two thirty-eight Race Street. This is 298. 238 Race Street up here, right on the corner and after the mill. The first mill on the corner there. (B: Uh huh) Right on the corner. Now they build up. You know from this mill to the corner of Appleton, that was all Ita-, it was a big long place. All house, you know those one-(B: Tenement) house. (B: Tenement, one-family houses?) One-family house, two apartment. (B: Oh I see) You know they want to bring the [bottom] they got to b-, the, (B: Um hm) get the upstairs too. (B: Um hm) So. Uhh (- -)

B: And whe-, when did you come? Do you remember roughly when you came?

M: I-I came uh, uh April, 20, 1915.

B: So this was during the War?

M: During, no the War wasn't started yet. It started while I was coming. (B: Over) Yeah. (B: Uh huh) So, my brother he had those apartment and little store on the corner, and he had seven or eight boarder with him. You know, boys. At this age they working around here and they always get together. (B: Um hm) They had four r-room upstairs and, and four downstairs. (B: Um hm) So the first come start the wa-, the, the, first come start the f-, the cook. [chuckles] [interviewer chuckles] The first come home.

B: [chuckles] The first one who came home would start the cooking [both talk; interviewer unclear] Would start the cooking. [laughs] So there were four boys who lived upstairs and there were four boys who lived downstairs.

M: It w-, no, no. [both talk; interviewer unclear] They were uh e- [unclear] four room upstairs. (B: Oh they had four rooms) You know they, they was living upstairs. (B: Um hm) But there were about six, four, four men (B: Um hm) and my two brothers. There were (B: Oh) six men.

B: Six men boarded together. (M: Boarded together) Ah huh. And you came, a-, and (M: And then I came) you were the only woman [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: And then I came here, so I have to take over.

B: You take over is taking care of the six men.

M: The care, the, the ra-, the thing regular the way they were, only then I do the cook, I do the cleaning, and I (B: Run the shop) run the shop. [chuckles]

B: And so the men were working in the mills (M: In the, in the) or you said [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Eh, in the yard, in the brickyard; in the brickyard (B: In the brickyard) in Willimancet.

B: All of the men were working in the brickyard?

M: Well, some, different job, (B: Uh huh) b-but my brother he's working, (B: Your brother) he was, he was boss down there where they make the brick. (B: I see; I see; he was the, the boss) He was the boss. (B: Uh huh) So he can't leave. He had to go. (B: Yeah) And my brother was eh working with him, the other brother. (B: Um hm, um hm) So, when I come over you can imagine what a place I find. (B: Um hm) [chuckles]

B: Eh, the men's house?

M: [The] mess! [laughs] They w-, they used to wash their floor, they'd throw a pail of water on the floor and sh-, shove it around the door. [both laugh] I know all um stove, and no washing machine, washing by hands. I don't know how they did. They manage it, but they manage it anyway. (B: Um hm)

B: And so when you took over the shop

M: So I take over the shop,

B: Had you any experience?

M: And I make it the boarders so they pay so much a week, and I was taking care everything.

B: So you would, you were running the shop, you were (- -)

M: I was running the store

B: Running the store it

M: Because there was an ap-, like my room there, (B: Uh huh) and [unclear] was the apart-,

the k-, (B: I see) kitchen and the (B: I see) living room and all that.

B: And you were taking care of the men as boarders.

M: And take care of the mens boarder. And [sighs] that was 1920, when I, I left for uh, 1915, a-a-and, I got to remember now, [pause: 3 sec.] I know everything, but just now because I want it.

B: It's all right. Let's, let's see. 1915 you came over and (M: Yeah) you were twenty-one years old, (B: Yeah, I l-) and you took over the shop. (B: Yeah) So let's just go you know, do, do a brief over review, (B: Yeah) and then come back. (M: Yeah) Uh, so how long did you stay in this shop?

B: In that, in that place over there we stay uh, oh about um, [pause: 2 sec.] mmm, [pause: 3 sec.] uh 1915, [pause: 2 sec.] uh 1916 we got the note that we have to move (B: Um hm) because they was going to build all the building they built after the shop. Uhh, those [unclear] things there. I get confused. (B: Um hm; so then) And then we move on Appleton Street.

B: You moved to Appleton Street, uh huh.

M: 80 Appleton Street.

B: 80 Appleton Street.

M: And that's where Archie l-, uh born. On that little house over there.

B: So Archie is your brother's

M: Is my brother's

B: Son.

M: Son. (B: Okay) But not the son we had the store. The other brother. But they were together, you know. (B: Okay, yup)

B: So then how long was the shop (- -)

M: Then on Appleton Street the same trouble.

B: You were evicted again.

M: We got evicted because they was going to build the uh, and when we bought the house, the house, uh we bought the house but the land it was belong to the city. (B: Um hm, um hm) So we have to move again. (B: Uh huh; huh) 1917. Aaah, then that's the time we bought this, eh, no, let's see, the house we bought in 1923. In, in e-, in [enamel], in Appleton Street we live, [swallows liquid] oh we move nineteen sixtee-, seventeen, [pause: 3 sec.] no, 1918 we move

down there. And then uh, when the nineteen eh, nineteen, the War it was over, 1918, (B: Um hm) we got all my family come over from Italy. (B: Hm) S-s-seven all together, (B: Hm) in one bunch.

B: You had them come over, yeah.

M: We had to come over here. So when, then we bought the house, we went down there. (B: Um hm) Then (- -)

B: Down where?

M: Down in Appleton Street.

B: Then you bought a house (M: Yeah) on Appleton Street.

M: Then, when we have to move down there, we bought this. 1923. (B: Um hm)

B: Why did you have to move down there? You were e-evicted again or (- -)

M: Eh because they want the house. They want to eh tear the house down. They build a mill there, where they, they play ball or something I don't know. (B: Um hm) So we have to move, so we have to move, we have to buy something, eh solid so they can't throw us out (B: Yeah) again. [chuckles] (B: Yeah, yeah) So we bought this house. (B: I see, in 1923) But that wasn't like this now. That was you know the old-fashioned (B: Um hm) toilet was in the, in the old way and, (B: Um hm) everything is so (- -)

B: Where, where was the sho-, shop at that time?

M: Ehh, the store? (B: Um hm) Then when we have to move down there we have to look for the store. That's, at that time we move on Main Street. That was an empty Main Street store there, (B: Um hm) right on the corner, and we stayed twen-, thirty-three years on that store.

B: On the corner of Main and (- -)

M: On the corner of the Main and Spring.

B: And Spring. And what was the name of your shop?

M: Ahh, Moroni's Market.

B: Moroni's (- -)

M: Moroni's Market.

B: Moroni's. Not Marconi.

M: Market. Eh that was a, a grocery store.

B: Moroni's Market.

M: Moroni's Market. (B: Uh huh, uh huh) Yeah.

B: And, and did your relatives help in the shop?

M: Oh my, my people they, they stay in the house. My mother she take over the house. I was working in the store. You know that time, we don't speak English. Uh we had to manage the way we want. (B: Yeah) Then me, by staying in s-, the store, tra-, eh work with the people, I learn the English little (B: Um hm) faster. (B: Um hm) And then I learn little French a little faster. (B: Um hm) And so that's, so I had two sister, two sister a-and a brother come from over there. And my, and one brother-in-law, and father and mother. Seven. They were seven. So my f-, my brother-in-law he was a bricklayer. He find a job to build. (B: Um hm) And his wife she stay home. And my mother stay home and, my sisters then they got to, they, she got, he got a, she got a job up in the mill where they burn up there where you are now. (B: Um hm) And that mill the corner where (- -)

B: Skinner's?

M: The Skinner. (B: Um hm) One. And the other one she was in her tee-, thirteen years old, she went to school.

B: Where'd she go to school?

M: Down here in Appleton Street.

B: Which school was that?

M: For the city. City school. (B: City school) Yeah. So, and my, my other brother is working down the [Alapac]. (B: Um hm, um hm) Then, when they close the, the brickyard down there, (B: Um hm) then my brother, we sh-, we work in the store steady then. All of them. My brother, me, and, my brother he had a friend in, in Connecticut, in Hartford, that they come in this country together and they was working together in the old country; (B: Um hm) and they were, were my, my brother used to work in the grocery store and the other boy used to work in a butcher shop. You know in the old country when it's market they ain't got no meat. The meat is separate (B: Um hm) from the m-, from the grocery. (B: Um hm, um hm, um hm) So, he went down and ask him if he wants to come up here and stay with us. He was a butcher, he was making all kind of sausage. And then, 1917 I married that guy. He was such a good guy. (B: Um hm) I marry him, by k-, he come with us. (B: Um hm) Stay with us. (B: Um hm) [sirens in background]

B: So he made the sausages for the mark-, Moroni's Market.

M: [He made them] Moroni's Market. (B: Uh huh) And company, you know. (B: Uh huh)

And then, I got married 1917, down the church down there.

B: Precious Blood?

M: Precious Blood. First time we come in this country we couldn't speak no English, or no French, we have to be-, belong to the Sacred Heart. (B: Um hm) Because Sacred Heart they take all the nation they coming in becau-, we got all kind of nation on Sacred Heart. (B: Oh I see) But this was all English and everything. But was too far for us the walk up there. (B: Um hm) So in time, one by one, we go over there for church. As long you Catholic you can go any church you want. (B: Um hm) So, they don't want to take us in for uh parishes because we was in French. (B: Um hm) In that time they got to be French to be-, belong to that, to be-, bel-, be a, a parishioner. So, my brother, they can walk. They go any way, they go up there, they go down there, but me, I had to go down there because I have to take care of the house and everything. I had no chance to get up there, walk up there. There were no car that time. We own a tr-, we had a truck for the business, but we didn't no car. (B: Um hm) So, I ask the priest down there, two, how many time I ask why didn't we pu-, didn't you put me on parishioner. So I, I, I can depend on where I'm belong to. (B: Um hm) Always say, "I'm very sorry ma'am," he say, "but I, we can't do it." Then tha-, that's a French, just French. And I told it, [laughing] don't put that on the mar-, on the, on the bill now [interviewer laughs] because what I tell him, I said, "You take all my business down there, if I got a mass to say, if there's a funeral, I got married, I baptize my baby, you take me in even if I'm not parishioner." [both laugh] Business, you know. (B: Yeah) Yeah. "And why you didn't (- -)" "Well, I'm sorry, that's the law. That's the, the way they are." Don't put that on, [interviewer laughs] uh because I don't want that to be uh, come out on the movies. (B: Don't worry about it) [laughing] Uhh don't worry about, don't put anything that uh, that my, laugh on me when I tell you.

B: It's, it's, but did, they never did make you a parishioner.

M: They make me parishioner on, in time when (B: [time]) I begin to speak French, I understand (B: Uh huh) French and, and Mrs. [Fleury] she's the one more she pushed me. She pushed them to take me in! (B: Uh hah) So I couldn't understand why they take me business and they don't take me for a parishioner. (B: Uh huh, uh huh) Well so they take me in. Then I be, then we get into the uh St. Anne Society. We'll get all together, (B: S-s-st. Anne?) all these lady. St. Anne Society. (B: St. Anne Society; okay) And then knowing all the people, because when we got the store over there, the business got good; and we know all the French people coming in. (B: Um hm) And we had a French guy. French, (B: Um hm) speak-, eh butcher. Theys use speak French with him women. They all come in because we got a lot of stuff and good stuff. And they all make a change from the [gourmet]. And we were close. So, (- -)

B: Okay. Let's, let's go on a minute. Um y-, so when you took the store on (M: In Main Street) Main Street, you were there for th-, a long time.

M: Thirty-three years.

B: Thirty-three years. (M: Yeah) And, and you (- -)

M: We moved there October 15, nineteen seven, tee-, eh, yeah, 1917. We move over there.

B: 1917. And that's when you married your husband.

M: And that's when I married my husband.

B: So the two of you ran the store.

M: Me and my husband and my brother.

B: And your brothers (M: My brother) helped too. (M: Three) But they, your brothers also had other jobs.

M: No. Eh,

B: Well they lost their jobs.

M: Eh he quit. [both talk; interviewer unclear] Uh when we move over there he quit the job because we were too busy. We (- -)

B: So the whole family (- -)

M: The whole family helped.

B: And helped.

M: My brother

B: Whereas your mother (B: M-) ran the house.

M: M-, the house and the house,

B: And so she would cook

M: And my, the two sisters (- -)

B: For when you came home. (M: Yeah) And clean and do the washing (M: Yeah) and that sort of thing.

M: Well you know I help her because (- -)

B: And you'd help a bit. (M: Yeah) Okay, (M: So) for thirty-three years that went on.

M: For thirty-three was on that corner. (B: Um hm, um hm) Well the business get good (- -)

B: Okay, okay, let's just, just finish this a second. So for thirty-three years you were there,

and then, then what happened?

M: 1948, (B: Um hm) we had to move, we eh not we had to move, we want to move because there was getting small the place, (B: Um hm) and the business was getting big. (B: Big) So we bought the building in front of the other store, (B: Um hm) in Main Street, on this side. Is in back of that, where they built now. (B: Um hm) In Main Street (B: Um hm) though. There was the, the store and the two apartment house. (B: Wonderful) And uh (- -)

B: So, so you bought a store and the apartment house. (M: And the apartment) So you rented the apartments.

M: I rent the apartment, (B: I see) yeah.

B: All right and how long did that, did you, did you (- -)

M: 1948.

B: That was 1948 until when?

M: Uhh, un-, until when s-six-, 1968 we sold, we, we retired.

B: You retired in sixty-eight.

M: Because we were old! (Yeah) I was seventy-two (B: Yeah) and my brother he was seventy-four.

B: And how about your husband?

M: And, but now is the thing that my husband, my first husband, (B: Um hm) he die 1930. (B: Um hm) My boy he was nine, nine years old when he die. (B: Um hm, um hm) So, you know, (B: Um hm) I still, I still waited for five years. (B: Um hm) It was no life. (B: Um hm, um hm) You know. (B: Um hm, um hm) And my, my boy was here (B: Um hm) with the grandmother and everything. (B: Um hm, um hm) But he miss his father and I miss him too! [laughs] (B: Yeah, yeah) So, one of a g-, uhh, the next husband husband [arrive] by Marconi; before it was [Medillini]. But the store was Moroni always.

B: Um hm. That's your maiden name.

M: M-, eh my maiden name. Uhh, I marry 1935. (B: Um hm)

B: How did you meet your second husband?

M: My second husband is, a f-, a family come from Italy. They used to trade for us. They used to be best friends. And this was one of their nephew. (B: Oh I see) And he was a very nice man and he, in fact, when my husband die, he die in that room there, (B: Um hm) and he stay up all night, you know; and, and that time there was n-, there was only the rich people they go to the

s-, the funeral parlor.

B: Um hm. Right, you'd do it here then wouldn't you?

M: Yeah, so it's eas-, there were three or four men (B: Um hm) and that guy was in it. (B: Um hm) He was (- -)

B: And wha-, what did your husband die of? The first husband.

M: Oh I don't know, it's s-s-s- (- -)

B: Some sickness? (M: Yeah)

M: And (- -)

B: Okay, so then you married your second husband [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: My second husband.

B: And then (- -) In, in (- -)

M: Until he, 1935.

B: 1935. And did he help out in the business?

M: Yeah. He, they come in. Both the husband come in with me. Me and my brother. We were the, the, the ones start the business. The first husband he comes in and help us, (B: Um hm) that he use to live in, in Hartford. (B: Um hm) Then I marry him and, a-and the other, and the uh, he didn't have no house and n-nobody. (B: Um hm) So he come in. And the other one, he was living with [the rent]. They used to live on Fairview. He come in with us. He never was married, so he come in with us and he work in the store with us.

B: Oh I see; and, and they stayed like that until you retired.

M: And we stay like that until he died.

B: Until he died.

M: He die (- -) We stay forty-six mar-, forty-six years married with that guy, (B: Um hm) in wh-, in that, that's s-s-six years in October that he's dead. (B: Mmm, mmm)

B: So he had a long life, too. (M: Yeah, yeah) Yeah.

M: He was eighty-two. (B: Uh huh, uh huh) And we always live here, [both talk; interviewer unclear] all together. My brother he used to live upstairs, the one, the o-, when we bought the house, (B: Um hm) my brother live upstairs and I live down here with all the family.

All my family they stay with me all the time. I c-, I bury them all. (B: Uh huh) They're all dead.

B: Your brothers and your sister.

M: My brother, and I only got a brother and a sister, (B: Uh huh) and me. (B: Uh huh, [unclear]) Out of the, out of the seven

B: Out of the seven children.

M: Children. (B: Um hm) And the other one they're all dead. (B: Um hm, um hm, um hm) So (- -)

B: So, let's, let's go back then. Now you've given me that sketch of what happened. Let's go back and try and get some memories of those times. Um, what do remember about the boarders, first off, in 1915 when they came? What was your life like then? If you were taking care of what, six men, eight men? (M: Yeah) What sort of things did you have to do? What kind of cooking, and (M: They) cleaning and (- -)

M: Yeah, well, wha-, th-, gen-, I was young. (B: Uh huh) I, I was just like a, a bird. (B: Uh huh) I was all over! (B: Uh huh) I used to cook, I used to wash all the clothes by hand. I used to iron, I used to cook. But they all was working all day out. They all come in at night. (B: Um hm) I only make one big meal. (B: Um hm, um hm) But I-I stay up until maybe sometime maybe one, two o'clock. They play card at night. (B: Um hm) [both laugh] And they stay up. Uh five o'clock, me I got to be up. I got to make the lunch for all of them. They, they go to work, I got to make some breakfast. Oh breakfast they used to take care of themself. (B: Um hm, um hm) You know. And, but I had to make the lunch. (B: Um hm) Make uh get the basket there, a basket, fill in their lunch, what they want. (B: Um hm) And then they go to work. (B: Um hm) Me, I clear up the house, then I go to store. When they come back about five o'clock, ah I come back from the store four o'clock, I pick up from the store what I want to cook for supper. And when they come home at five o'clock, six o'clock, before they get ready, wash up, w-w-w-we had supper at seven o'clock. (B: Hm) [both talk: interviewer unclear] And they all [toge-] (- -) And then after [they] finish (- -)

B: Did they help you do the dishes?

M: Uh no. (B: No?) No, that (- -)

B: You would do, you, you would do the dishes.

M: We didn't change many dishes, don't, don't worry. Oh, each one, one dish. In one dish they put everything. (B: Um hm) If were soup is the dish for [right through]. If he was spaghetti [chuckling] his dish is [right through]. (B: Um hm) Only one dish of each. (B: Uh huh) Yeah. Oh my brother once in a while they give me a hands, and my husband. (B: Um hm)

B: And then, then the men would play cards and [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: They play cards and then maybe

B: Have a few jugs of wine and (- -) Yeah?

M: [laughs] Yeah. Until (- -)

B: What would you do then? What would you do, while they were doing that?

M: [pause: 3 sec.] Well uh there's a lot of work to do. After supper you get ready this, get ready that, get ready for what they want for breakfast, for uh lunch. You know. And uh (- -)

B: Did you sew? [pause: 2 sec.] Did you sew?

M: Oh, I sew, I s-, I, not sew, that make a boo-, make a suit, but I patch. I like to patch. (B: Um hm) [laughs] My Archie he give me hell sometime, [talks in high-pitched voice; words unclear; both laugh]

B: So you would do that [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Oh I was, I was s-s-something. (B: Yeah) They won't believe that I do, they were [unclear], that I used to do (B: Uh huh) the work I done. Hah! [both talk; interviewer unclear] That's why I live that long! [interviewer chuckles] I work hard. (B: Yeah)

B: During that, those days, while you were taking care of your brothers and the boarders, y-you were actually putting in a full day running the store.

M: I was running the store.

B: What sort of things did you have to do there? What did you sell? What, what were your chores?

M: In the house?

B: Wh-, what did (M: In the store?) you sell in the store?

M: Oh, all Italian grocery store, all imported stuff, and besides the American. (B: Um hm) That was a f-, a real full store. (B: Hm)

B: So did you do the o-ordering?

M: No. My brother and my husband they was taking care that. (B: Uh huh) Yeah.

B: Who took care of the money? In the s-, in the store?

M: Most me.

B: You took c-

M: Most me, when I'm in the store. (B: Um hm, um hm) If I don't, my husband and my brother (B: Um hm) would. (B: Um hm) We uh, we, you trust one another. (B: Um hm, um hm) Always, always there, then the, and the butcher even he was there, he take care the money. We used trust him. (B: Um hm, um hm) Trust in one another. We all, we never had any, [unclear]. [laughs]

B: You didn't have any re-, refrigeration then, right?

M: Oh yeah. [both talk; interviewer unclear] We had a big walk-in box. (B: Uh huh) And we had those long cases where you put all the cold cut and the ham.

B: On the corner here?

M: No, no. Over there. [both talk; interviewer unclear] When we moving over there. [both talk; interviewer unclear] Oh in there there was only dry stuff. (B: Uh huh) You know. Uum, bread, (B: Uh huh) eh, soda, milk, (B: Um hm) and the rest all can goods. Spaghetti of all kind, (B: Um hm) because many Ameri-, Fr-, uh Italian people everything, got no spaghetti they got nothing to eat. (B: Um hm) That time. (B: Um hm) Now they're Americanized. Now s-, American [ones] eat more spaghetti than we do. (B: Yeah, that's true) [laughs]

B: So when you moved down to Apple-, in, down to Main Street, then, you made it a different kind of a store.

M: Then we had a man, from New York, he come in s-, eh ee, he was a salesman. The one they go around you know. Like my son now he's a salesman. He going all around the store and stuff. [takes a deep breath] He come in and he talk to us-s-s. He, he got an idea eh, and [everything]. So he trust us. When we move from over there, there was only a little room. When you move in the big store that little room it looks like if it's a pantry. (B: Right) [laughs] So then, then he comes in, he got [feet] on us. He filled up all our store. All the, all grocery more or less what the people buy, in I-, in Italian store. In Italian ehh stuff; and the American. Then little by little all this salesmen coming in and you can put this in, you can put this in, and everything. And that guy, he trust us for four thousand dollar. The first bill, then he was, four thousand dollar in 1915, (B: Um hm) that was uh just like a, a hundred thousand today. (B: Um hm, um hm, um hm) So (- -)

B: So that's how you got started!

M: Uhh? [both talk; interviewer unclear] We got good started! (B: Yeah) He trust us. And then, the business got good because we had the grocery to sell. (B: Um hm) Then he, a-any time he come in we give him the order what missing, and so much the bill we had to pay for the one he put in the first time. (B: Ohhh) So in, in couple of m-m-, in couple of year we clean up everything. Everything was ours after. (B: Um hm; yeah that's great)

B: So you had a walk-in refrigerator down there, (M: Yeah) so you started to sell meats then.

M: Yeah, oh then we sell meat. Then, like I say we had a groc-, we had a bull-, Italian butch-, uh, a French butcher. (B: Um hm) And those old, old people there they order all F-, you know all French. (B: Um hm) You, you can, you didn't even know what no other, other words like the Puerto Ricos. (B: Um hm, um hm) Now you can see only Puerto Ricos in the Main Street. (B: Um hm, um hm) Huh. (B: Um hm) You're not a Puerto Rico, you're a Puerto Rico no. (B: Hm) Whatever you are anyway you can see so many of (B: Yeah) that stuff. (B: Yeah, yeah, yeah) And uh, so they all popped in. (B: Hm) They come in and (- -)

B: So they were mai-, French Canadians mainly down [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Yeah, French Canadian.

B: What else?

M: Eho and then (- -)

B: Italians, obviously.

M: Oh the Italian if is any around they all was coming down because my husband he especially used to make all kind of sausage. (B: Um hm) All kind of Italian sausage. (B: Um hm) Yeah. (B: Um hm)

B: Now how did you cope, what was the, the business like during the Depression for you? Because you'd be down there during the Depression.

M: [sighs] It was hard. But we had good customer. We had good people. (B: Um) We trust them. And they pay for, when they work you know. [both talk; interviewer unclear] People they were really honest. [both talk; interviewer unclear] Pay weekly.

B: Pay weekly.

M: Yeah. (B: Uh huh) Oh yeah we trust them. We were good and they were good with us. Lot of them, lot of them they still owe us, but good-bye. Ayeh. (B: Um hm) When we close the store I burn everything what they owe me, I burned everything. I don't need anything. (B: Um hm) And. (b: Um hm) But they were lot of good one anyway. (B: Um hm)

B: Do you have any memories of any incidents during the Depression?

M: The Depression there were the stamp. You know the old stamp. You r-, you didn't remember because you were young. You can buy this, you can buy that, you got to have stamp. We had some grocery they trust us eh, not trust us, we had the money to pay for but w-, th-we used to get aw-, anything you want even without stamp, as long we give them the business and all what they want. And the m-, and the family they used to do the same thing, to us. (B: Um) They get the stamp, we got the stuff, th-we can buy anyone as long you give me all your stamp.

B: And then what would you do with the stamps?

M: With the stamp we have to ehm count it and s-, and bank it just like money. (B: Uh huh, uh huh) Oh you got to have the stamp. (B: Uh huh, uh huh) Yeah. And y-you make check with the stamp just like you make check with the money. (B: Oh) See? For the people they didn't trust you. But even for the people they trust, you got to give them all you can give because they give us what we want. (B: Um hm) There was sugar, butter and lot of thing that you can, you can get not even with the stamp. (B: Um hm) They were scarce. (B: Um hm) But my customer they always have what they want. Not to say they want a pound of butter, they might get half a pound, (B: Um hm) because they know they couldn't get it nowhere! (B: Um hm; um hm, um hm) Oh we had a lot of, we had, we had hard but we done good just the same because we had (- -)

[end of side one]

B: With the eh, during the Depression they had peddlers right, that would go around.

M: Oh yeah. They had [unclear]

B: Did, did

M: [talks at same time] The vegetable m- (- -) Huh?

B: Did, did you supply the peddlers at all? Did you [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: No, no. The peddler they supply only the markets of the, the, the vegetable. You know the fruit and the vegetable around there. (B: Um hm) But in, in uh, on Sunday, (B: Um hm) when the store was closed, (B: Um hm) my brother and my husband they used to fill up the truck and go around, up, outside with, in the woods, when they, they had shanty. The people they cut wood. (B: Um hm) They used to, we used to bring up the stuff. [both talk; interviewer unclear] With the truck.

B: And they lived up there.

M: They live up there.

B: In the woods. (M: Yeah) Uh huh. And you used to take the truck up to them. (M: Yes) So they worked seven days a week really.

M: Ohhhh yeah, oh yeah! Yeh more than seven days a week. (B: Yeah, yeah) [chuckles]

B: What, during the Depression wh-when, when, when was your shop open, from when until when? What time in the morning? Nine o'clock? Eight o'clock?

M: Uh [sure] close the store? Oh no (- -)

B: When did you open it and what time did you close it?

M: Six is, six in the m-, uh night, a-and we open on six in the morning.

B: Six in the morning until six at night. (M: Yeh) Did you s-, did you have a lunch break?

M: Well most of them they had e-, eh, they uh, they eat in the store you know they make a sandwich and they (- -)

B: So you didn't close the shop?

M: No, no, (B: Store) no, no, no. (B: No, uh huh) No, we open and c-, stay close, (B: Uh huh) and stay open until twelve hour a day, I. (B: Uh huh)

B: During the f-, during the uh Second World War, how did your business change during that time? Did it get better? (M: Well) Did it improve?

M: When the War is start I didn't uh, well the first war it start, when, when I was young there.

B: Okay, not in the first war, the second war.

M: The second war. The second war (- -)

B: You were down on Main Street.

M: Yeah. Well, well I got two nephew they went to the war. One was be-, eh-n-, the nephew, this, this, the brother used to be in the store with us. [takes breath] And uh, [pause: 3 sec.] well that was the time that was the stamp. (B: Um hm; rationing) Rationing. It was ration line. Everything ration. R- (- -)

B: So it was a continuation of the stamp that they'd used during the Depression?

M: Dur-, during the Depression only. (B: Hm) Yeah. (B: Hm) When the war it, i-it's [unclear] us. (B: Um hm, um hm) Yeah.

M: Di-, business picked up a little around here during the War, didn't it? Those, people started to work.

M: Like I say, if you had good, good eh, name and money (B: Um hm) you can buy the stuff all you want from the, from the uh, from the, the wholesale. But uh, and this stuff was scarce a little bit too, you can get all you want you know. Maybe canned goods, but like cheese and butter, and thing i-it goes all with the war.

B: So how was it, how was business for you during that time?

M: Well it was pretty good. (B: Um hm) Yeah. (B: Um hm) And by, by right we make the money more in the wartime than, than the other, Depression, than the Depression. (B: Huh, huh) It pick up. (B: Um hm) Because we had the store to sell and uh, and the people they had the money because they when they were lucky they not go in the war, they work all they want. They work all the time. They make money like mad. Everybody make money in the wartime, because the mill they used to w-work three, three shift all the time. And people they working. (B: Um hm)

B: So they would come and buy more food and (M: Oh yeah) business was (- -)

M: Oh yeah, they, they'll, they had money to buy anything as long they can get the food. And who had the food to [unclear] But in those big market, they was a many big market then, but uh, they, the shelves they was all empty almost. As many they put out, as, as much as they sell. (B: Hm) And when they can't get in the big market they come to the small market, and then the small market sell all we can get. (B: Um hm, um hm) Yeh.

B: Di-, you had regular customers during that time?

M: Oh yeah.

B: Always [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Y-, oh yeah, we had, we had, oh we had a lot of customer. Weekly. And then lot of them they was on the welfare. Even if the one they were on the welfare.

B: Do you remember any in particular? Any characters in particular during that time?

M: What do you mean?

B: Any particular people who stick out in your mind? If you think back to the, to the wartime.

M: They're all dead. (B: Um hm)

B: But do you remember any, that, that you could describe?

M: [pause: 3 sec.] I remember lot of name, but not to say the big people they be uh you know (- -)

B: No, no, just ordinary people. Who, who comes to mind?

M: Oh. [chuckles] Oh, Jesus, I don't know, I g-, I got so many I don't know which I (B: Anyone) guess what, (B: Anyone) what I should say. Like, like Mrs. [Fleury] there were

customer for, for all th-their life. (B: Uh huh) The chil-, their children, the children they trade with us, and they put up house and they trade with us. Children, the children they all, when they see me now, if there's anybody die there, I go to the, the wake, they all know me. (B: Yeah, hm)

B: So even the, the people's children in those days would come back to the store?

M: [both talk; interviewer unclear] Oh yeah, oh yeah, they, and pay weekly, too. (B: And pay weekly, too) Yeah. (B: Um hm, um hm) Some of them they had bad luck, [Cocolo] maybe he got lay off, or he got sick, or he [unclear] Eh we used to trust them and they pay back when they start to work. They were good people. (B: Um hm) All people.

B: After the War, do you remember any changes in your business then? In the fifties say?

M: Well that was a time after the War around 1950, something like that, eh people you know they had a lot of money. And the market they begin they open it and they go around. Business went down a little bit. You know. (B: Um hm, um hm) But we didn't mind because we had enough to do. (B: Um hm, um hm) Sometime (- -)

B: That's when they started to open these big supermarkets you mean.

M: Yeh, when they open the big supermarket. The Pat Market. Uh when we open our market we was the biggest market in Main Street. But when Pat Market open, (- -)

B: Is that Pat O'Connor?

M: Yeah, the Pat (B: Yeah) Market (B: Yeah) down in the corner there. Then the customer they start to go there. But he don't trust there. They got to pay cash. Most of the customer they stay with us just the same because they can go to store without money and they get what they want. Down there they go, maybe if they see something sa-, on a sale you know. (B: Um hm) But then we got union with the, with the big grocery store. When they got sale we have sale, too. (B: Um hm) B-besides, us we, we charge it even with the sale, but down there they got to pay cash. (B: Um hm) See? (B: I see; yeah) Uh that's, that's our customer and they keep stay with us. (B: Um hm, um hm)

B: So even though you got competition, the first lot of comp-, real competition, you were able to keep your clientele because [both talk] you used to give them credit.

M: Yeah, because down there they got to pay cash, and carry it. We used to deliver. (B: And you used to deliver) Charge and deliver. Sometime they call up, "Oh, I forget a loaf of bread, can you bring it up? Maybe you'll have to go up to the first floor." For a loaf of bread. And mostly that time they sell the coal by twenty-five pound bag, and a lot of them they used to buy it by the bag, because they got no place to put it, eh to put them down cellar, buy the eh big amount. So we used to sell a lot of coal. (B: Hm) Oh, I bring myself lot of bag of coal up to the third floor. (B: Um hm) Twenty-five pound. (B: Hm)

B: Did you drive the truck or did you walk?

M: Oh, mun-, un-, around here?

B: You used to walk?

M: Oh, yeah. As far as we walk, we walk, but when we, too far, we get, we got the truck. Yeah.

B: So you would just, was there a special time in your day when you would do that? Or would you just drop it, everything and go, when they called you?

M: Oh well it's, it's, it's hard to tell. (B: Yeah) It's hard to tell.

B: Sometimes you would and sometimes (M: Yeah) you wouldn't.

M: It's hard to tell because we always have uh, like Archie, 1949, when eh her mother she took him on the count-, on the old country in that, he was only three years old. Oh no, [unclear] He born 1923 in the, yeah he was three years old. She went on the old country. And then, he stay there and my brother, his father, he can't go there that time because when my people they come from the old country they rent their land up there for ten years. And my father he come over to please my mother and to please us, but not to say he likes to come over. He likes the farm. (B: Um hm) So, they rent the farm for ten years. See they come eighteen, nineteen, 1919 and 1929 Archie's brother he went back because this wife and the s-, children, and the kid they was there already. So, then when my brother go over and my, he took my father, my fa-, he couldn't keep my father here, he wants to go! So, they went over there and they got back our farm because the, the lease was over, (B: Um hm) and they start up the farm, again. (B: Um)

B: So they went back and started up the farm.

M: But my father, he never li-, he d-, he couldn't st-, he had no peace there, because his wife were here, we were all here, he was a [pest] over there, too. (B: Um hm, um hm; hm) So uh (- -)

B: So did he come back?

M: 1936. 1936 we had it come over. He come back you see. I g-, I got it come over. [chuckles]

B: You, you got him to come back.

M: Yeah. He come back. But nineteen eigh-, thirty-eight he die. (B: Um hm) He only last two years. (B: Hm, hm)

B: But he, at least you got him back (M: We got him back) for a couple years.

M: And then A-, father, Archie, eh fa-, Archie's father he was over there over there with the brother, and everything. Uh he had to go to war. We lucky that he come back safe. (B: Um hm,

um hm, um hm) So, the war I finish about 1944, something like that. But Archie just assumed the war is o-, it was over. We had it come over. (B: Um hm) I think forty-nine. (B: Um hm, um hm) And, he stay with us just like a son. (B: Um hm, um hm) Always with us. (B: I see; that's nice) They (- -)

B: What a-, let's go back to when you had the shop in, in, on Main Street. What other shops do you remember near by?

M: Ohhh, there was Jacobson over here that was a l-l-little bigger than us. He [says], he was a Jew. Yeah, Jacobson.

B: And what did he sell?

M: The grocery like us, (B: Uh huh) but not Italian (B: Jewish) stuff.

B: Jewish grocery.

M: Um, American. (B: American) American most. Most American and uh maybe Jewish yeah (B: Um hm) because he was a Jewish. (B: Um hm, um hm) Then there was another one. There was four or five grocery on Main Street. But when we move over there we were the biggest. (B: Um hm) And Pat Supermarker over there, he used to be on Bridge Street. He had just a little market, just got, not quite as big as ours. (B: Hm) So he was the biggest one, and the people they used to come in a lot. (B: Um hm)

B: What other things besides, wh-what other stores beside grocery stores were there on Main Street?

M: Oh my God, there was, I, I, don't remember the name but it was uh, brick oh (- -) [pause: 3 sec.] There was the movies over there they, they build up the movies over there. Bijou, they used to call the movies. (B: Mmm) Bijou. And then, well there was a big Cohen, Cohen eh, eh, ehh g-, uh clothes store. Oh he had everything that Cohen. (B: Hm) Yeah.

B: There was a hat store. Was there a (M: Y-) hat store near by?

M: Yeah. A hat store, it was on the corner i-, where the Community Bank is now. (B: Um hm) And then he move right next to us in Main Street. (B: Um hm) Ah (- -)

B: And what was the name of the hat store?

M: Ahh, ah.

B: Do you remember, do you r-remember the man who ran it?

M: Ehh, th-, there was some Jewish people. (B: Uh huh)

B: And they sold men's hats?

M: On-, men's hat, hat (- -)

B: And they, and they made them, right?

M: Yeah, [they make].

B: They made them a-, in the store. (M: Yeah) What kinds of hats, do you remember?

M: Ohhh my, don't, huh, I still got some hat that I buy from him. (B: Ah huh) [both laugh]

B: Fedoras. [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: [chuckling] Ohh very ni-, they were, they were nice hat. I, I got, I had a Christmas tree, I bought it from them. He give it to me when he close. He say, "You can have that. That's silver, silver uh, Christmas tree." I gave them to the, the, uh only last year, I give them to the, maybe go to the ch-, church there. Ah, Roderick. (B: Um hm) You know they got Christmas tree all over when it's Christmas, so I give mine, Christmas. With all the ornament and everything. (B: Hm; hm)

B: H-how did you get on with the other shopkeepers?

M: Oh very nice, oh yeah. They all like us. We never was competition, just say I'm going to sell [unclear] and that. We all was more or less, no matter where you go. (B: Um hm) You know.

B: When did you get a chance to talk to them? (M: Huh?) When did you get a chance to talk to them, you were so busy in the shop?

M: [sighs] I was busy all the time, all the time. (B: Um hm, um hm) Mm.

B: Would you pop in and see them? Would you go in and see them? (M: Where?) In their stores.

M: Oh yeah, if we ha-, we, when we buy the stuff, they [all us], we bou-, I always buy my clothes down this way. I never went up street. When there was a regular, a regular store around here. (B: Um hm) Oh very seldom I go up street and buy my groc-, uh my f-, eh clothes or furniture and everything. There was, Main Street from the [Y] Street, to, to way, to Adams Street, that was a real like a, High Street now is a poor house.

B: But then it was thriving.

M: But then, then it was one bigger than another. And they all they used to own the bo-, building themself. (B: Um hm, um hm, um hm)

B: You owned the apartment building next door to you in the shop. Did uh, who took care

of handling the rent and all that stuff?

M: Ohh, the, the owner he was trapping me. And next, next to me, next to us it was uh, [pause: 3 sec.] they, they f-, make paper, j-, uh, newspaper. (B: Um hm) You know. [Logistics]. (B: [Logistics]) [Logistics]. Right next to us. (B: Um hm) And then right next to us it used to be a little shed, it was a, a c-, a shoe store. And right in front over there there was uh, oh a g-, [pause: 2 sec.] a garage I guess. Yeah, a big garage. There was a f-, um, [pause: 3 sec.] mmm, a funeral parlor, right in front of there.

B: [Biases]?

M: A funeral parlor.

B: [Biases]? Was it Blazes? [Biases]?

M: Uhh, well the old man [Fleury] used to work with the guy. (B: Uh huh) He used to be French. (B: Uh huh) And then, the, the old man [Fleury] they both die now. Ahh, he put up the gr-, the funeral parlor where the Mrs. [Fleury] is now. You went over there and see Mrs. [Fleury] yet?

B: Thursday. (M: Huh?) Thursday I'm going.

M: Oh Thursday or Tuesday?

B: This coming Thursday I'm going to go.

M: Oh, this coming Thursday. (B: Um hm; yeah) Yeah. And then it was uh, a place where they make monument, right next to them they build a bijou. Above the, and on the other side the bijou it was a, a, [pause: 3 sec.] a place where they all those French people they meet sometime. You know those (B: Um hm) big hall? (B: Um hm) And then right in the corner it used to be big, big building. It was a saloon in the bottom and all the apartment upstairs. Oh my goodness. (B: Hm, hm) Oh that was full! Main Street it was just like High Street when it was in good condition. (B: Um hm, um hm)

B: And you used to go to Precious Blood Church.

M: And I used to go to Precious Blood Church. [chuckles] Like I said before, (B: Um hm) and then uh all those French people they used to trade in the store I used to meet them over there. (B: Um hm) And the mass on that time, that was in uh, in French, but it, it, only the preach in French. The mass was in Latin. You know. (B: Um hm) All the l-, the uh, the mass they, they got to be in Latin at that time. But the preach was in French. And that's where I learned French. (B: Hm) Between the little store and go to church and then visit the Society. (B: Um hm) Then I got my French in it. (B: Um hm, um hm) So, (B: Hm) now out of three language I didn't even speak one good one. [interviewer laughs] I get confused. Eh (- -)

B: What did you use to do for fun?

M: I never had no fun. (B: Um hm) Working all the time, working all the time. [The] time in the store and the house and the, and then when my mother die, I had to do all the work. (B: Um hm) The house.

B: She took care of raising your son then, while you were at work?

M: [both talk; interviewer unclear] Y-, oh yeah, my mother, he used to sit here my son. (B: Um hm) My mother, she always sit over there. (B: Um hm) She do a lot of sewing, you know patching. (B: Um hm) [chuckles] And my son he was over there, he's just like three, four years old. He had a needles and a, and a thread. He used to, she used to tell him the, how to put the button in. [both laugh] (B: Um hm, um hm) [He] was there all the time. (B: So she) And my, my brother he used to live upstairs, he had two children, too.

B: She used to take care [both talk; rest unclear]

M: About, about the same age. My, he born 1921, and my brother he got married 1922, so 1923 she got the children, she got one. Then was friends with mine because was two years difference but uh, and Archie was here all the time. (B: Um hm) [raises voice] And all the rest [they] outside Grandma was here! The house was full of kids all the time! [interviewer laughs] They all come and see Grandma. (B: Yeah) This it was the, the roost of the family! (B: Yeah, yeah) Yeh, I help all the family myself.

B: So, you never, y-y-you never went out, you never (- -)

M: My husband he was working in the store steady and me too. But when he come home, it's always something to do around the house. Fix here, fix there. Do you know what I mean. And I happen to have two husband, one like better than another. They look, they like to fix things. (B: Um hm, um hm, um hm) You know. (B: Um hm) And they were busy, (B: Um hm) on Sunday. (B: Um hm, um hm) We go to church and then, because I had a sister-in-law in Springfield, and that's the l-, the farthest we go, uh I mean my husband sometime on Sunday on the afternoon. (B: Um hm)

B: You said that you belong to the St. Anne Society. (M: Yeah) Wha-, what was that?

M: [pause: 3 sec.] Well it's, it's a saint. (B: Um hm) And you belong to the society. (B: Um hm) At that time they we were about fifty. (B: Um hm) Now we only seven or eight left. (B: Um hm, um hm) They all die. They were not died, they're in a nursing home.

B: Wha-, what was the function of the society? What did you do? Did you meet?

M: It's a club like.

B: Club, yeah.

M: Yeah it's a club.

B: Did you meet once a week, once a month? (M: Yeah) You met [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: We, once a month we had a big meeting. (B: Uh huh) And then once in a while we go out for a lunch. (B: Uh huh) We go breakfast or, like now we got one in June. (B: Uh huh) Mo-, we only about twenty-five. (B: Um hm) They [far away], something like that, lot of them in nursing home, lot of them are dead. (B: Um hm, um hm) Yeah.

B: Could you get loans through this society?

M: Oh yeah, oh yeah. We alwa-, even now after, we play card. After we play card we get cookies and coffee and tea. (B: Um hm) Whatever we want. Oh! Yeah we talk thing about's going on and what we see around and, (B: Um hm) oh it's enjoying. (B: Um hm)

B: Apart from your mother, there doesn't seem to have been many women in your life. We've seen mainly men around you. Is that, would that be s-, true?

M: Well I, I, I had two husband, they all left no, no family. (B: Um hm) They, one, the one, the last one he had all the family in the old country, he had only an aunt up here. (B: Um hm) My first husband, eh they would both die, they were eh, he was here. I didn't have no extra one except my family.

B: And you had all brothers and one sister, right?

M: Yeah the brother and sister, and they got married now, we got the stepchildren and (- -) [chuckles] (B: Um hm)

B: Did your sister work in the store?

M: No because they used to work for their own.

B: Use, she worked for her husband?

M: Yeah yeah. They got married. One got married 1923, (B: Uh huh) and the other one got married in, uhh, let's see the youngest one she got married in 1924, (B: Uh huh) Uhh, well, one, one after another in four, five years they all got married. (B: Um hm, um hm) Then uh left, left over only me and my husband and my kid. (B: Uh huh) But they were all here. They all build their own home and they all better than me. (B: Um hm) But they ain't got much left. (B: Um hm) There's only, I only got brother. (B: Um hm) One brother and one sister. (B: Um hm, um hm) But they all got children, and children, and children and (- -) Me I only got one son, (B: Hm) and I only had, only one son. (B: Um hm) And so he only got three children. (B: Um hm, um hm) Uh two (- -)

B: Did you want your children to work in the store? Did you want something diff-, did you want your son to wo-, take over the store?

M: Well my son he got the president of the store after when he got (B: He did) through the school. (B: He did) Yeah because the, he learn, he went to college. He had two, eh two years college in Springfield for business. (B: Um hm) Then when he come back he take over us, because he can read and right good and understand the business. (B: Um hm) We only talk uh you know, (B: Um hm, um hm) [gives a short laugh] natural the way we would, but (B: Yeah, yeah) then he, when he, when the su-, salesman come in, (B: Hm) he give him the order and, and if he's any mistake or if he'll have to write some letter from (- -) (B: Uh huh) He took over. (B: He took over) Yeah.

B: And when, when did he take over? Oh uh nineteen (- -) We, he always work in the store, he was only five years old he come to the store (B: Um hm) and fix up the shelf, nice. And he said, "Don't touch that shelf. I want it seem nice." I say, "We got to sell it." When he come over and see a hole, he say, "Y, y- right away fill up the r-, the hole." Y-oh he was crazy for that ta- [unclear] store. (B: Uh huh)

B: So he worked in the store right [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Yeah, oh yeah. Always, always. (B: Uh huh) Y-, y-, he come to the store all the time. (B: Wha-) If it wasn't for him maybe we wouldn't be still strong. (B: Uh huh)

B: And why did you move then? You said you retired. What happened to your son?

M: Oh he got married. When he got married we, he took an apartment above the store. And then, he got three children, (B: Um hm) he bought the house up there. (B: Uh huh) He got a beautiful home. [unclear]

B: But he, that was his job for a long time, right? Working the store.

M: Oh yeah, yeah. He didn't (- -)

B: So what happened when he lost that job? Or when, what happened to him?

M: He took the job to be a salesman.

B: Oh he took a job to be a salesman?

M: He's still a salesman.

B: For what, for which company?

M: In Springfield. (B: For what company) Uhh, [French] Brothers they call them.

B: And what do they, what do they make?

M: They sell gr-, uh grocery (B: Grocery) [a little]. They go around the hospital and big

restaurant sell all them stuff. (B: Uh huh)

B: [clears throat] Wha-, and when did you close down? In sixty, in the sixties you said.

M: The store? (B: Yeah) Sixty-eight.

B: Now was, what was business like at that time? When you closed?

M: Well then the big, big store come out. (B: Um hm) That wasn't too good. (B: Um hm; right) The business.

B: The business (M: Yeah, yeah) was starting (M: Well) to have problems? (M: Yeah, [unclear], yeah) But you still (- -)

M: Well we made the expenses let's say [unclear], (B: Yeah) but he couldn't save no money. (B: Right) We use to stay in business and just [for the pleasure to say]. (B: Um hm) But uh (- -)

B: But you had other income coming in from the apartment buildings, didn't you? (M: Oh, oh) You did. Didn't you own the apartment building you said. (M: Yeah) So you really had other income to keep (B: Oh yeah!) you going.

M: Oh yeah, yeah. (B: Yeah) Oh we oh (- -) (B: Yeah) We get old, we were old. (B: Yeah) We stay in business fifty-three years. (B: Um hm, um hm) Thirty-three over there, (B: Hm) and f-, and twenty, uh uh twenty. (B: Um hm; very good) Uh fifty-three years.

B: And you stayed in business during some rough times.

M: Oh yeah. From 1915 to 1968 is a lot of year. (B: Hm)

B: What particular skills do you think you have that enabled you to keep going?

M: Oh, because we love it. (B: Um hm, um hm) And it's, uh eh, "What we going to do," he say, "we stay here." Whatever we do, we make the expenses and that's it. (B: Um hm, um hm) We didn't even know that, when we sold the store we didn't owe nu-, a penny to nobody. All the, the store we had, it was a grocery store, we sell them out ourself.

B: So it was really a way of life for you.

M: Yeah huh. Oh everything. And then, then we, and after we move this store, it's a guy rent, rent the store right away, they put in a pizza pie, (B: Um hm) and he's still there the pizza pie, (B: Oh) but they don't make no business. (B: No) They change m-, hands three or four times. But they don't [unclear] business. Then, 1974 we sold the business. We sold the building. (B: The building) Seventy-four. (B: Um hm) My husband he was the one he had to take care all the thing. (B: Um hm) My brother he was sick. He, he never know anything about the fix anything. My husband he was just like a, a carpenter, or butcher, or (- -) He, he fix everything!

B: So he wa-, acted as the superintendent of the building. Your husband. (M: Yeah) He would take care of the [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Yeah, yeah. A-, any, any trouble go wrong, he, he's, he call us, see but he's the one that got the [unclear]. (B: Oh I see) So, 1974 uh, he says, "Let's sell it," he says. I was going to sell it before, but the guy that he took the, the, the market to put in the pizza pie, p-, zza, whatever it is, and uh he got the lease for five years. I could sell it before for more money. (B: Um hm) But eh, a-and, tell the lease he says he got the option to buy it, if I want to sell it. But af-, after the five years come up, he sell, he bought it. (B: Hm) [both talk; interviewer unclear] But uh, uh, at less money. Bec- (- -)

B: What nationality was the person who bought it?

M: The Greek.

B: He was Greek. Uh huh. And the people who lived in, in the apartment, and this was on Main Street, right? (M: Yeah)

B: Uhh, what nationality were they?

M: They were French, all French.

B: All French? (M: All French) Even up through the seventies? (M: Yeah, all French) Is it still there now?

M: Oh n-, no, now they close up. It's all board up. Oh they let them go to hell. (B: Uh huh, uh huh) Now I, I re-, I bu-, I was [unclear], and it, oh it's all closed up. It's a sha- (- -)

B: It's, the building's still there but it's all boarded up?

M: Yeah, it's all boarded up. The store is open but uh, I just went by today and looked in, "Oh my God," I said, "the place I make my money, (B: Yeah) look how it, it end." Use (- -)

B: And so the Greek, Greek man who took it over, (M: Oh) did he let it go to rack and ruin or (- -)

M: I don't know how he [unclear]. He started eh fool around with women and then the wife got trouble uhhh I don't know. (B: Um hm) Then he sold it and the guy he sold it, I don't know how that (- -) (B: Hm) I know he sold it. He s-, he got more money than he gave me. Oh he got a lot. He was lucky that [unclear].

B: Were there any fires there?

M: Fire no. We never had any fire. (B: Mm) No. (B: Um hm) Not that I know. (B: Hm)

B: Well, it's, [Mrs. Marconi groans] I don't want to tire you out [unclear] been great help. Um, is there anything that you think (M: You, [chuckling] you) you'd like to add? (M: Huh?) Is there anything you'd like to add?

M: What you want me to add? (B: Well) I told you everything.

B: Yeah. That's very, it's very nice.

M: I got nothing to t-talk about. [interviewer laughs] It's only trouble if I'll say more. (B: Y-y-y-) I had a lot of trouble. I, we had trouble, I had good time.

[end of tape]

[tape SG-HO-T323]

B: Twenty-six of April, 1988, Shifting Gears Project.

M: Can you repeat it?

B: So when your mother came over you were saying you know you had [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: When my mother come over here, it was forty years that I was married.

B: Uh huh. And she hadn't seen your husband.

M: And she gave me hell.

B: Because she, was she (- -)

M: Because I didn't get no children right away. (B: Oh, oh) I say "How can I get children with the work I am, you [unclear]. You can't get no children. Even if you want it you know [it won't catch] because you're too tired (B: Um hm) all the time. (B: Yeah) Huh? (B: I know, yeah) Yeah. We didn't done any, any trouble to save [unclear]. But they wasn't coming because they were so tired all the time.

B: Too stressed?

M: Yeah. So, when my mother come over then the year after I got, [son] I got.

B: Well in a way because she helped you with some of the jobs then when she came over so (- -)

M: Oh yeah. Oh she did [cover] a lot from the house. And me, I was in the store all the time [con] when my mother was here in the family. I just tell them what to do and any way they do it, they do it. Bring up to the store or anything they want, and make them cook. (B: Yeah) Yeah. Now me, I-I work hard in the store. Uhh, oh there I work hard.

B: Could you tell, you know for people who don't know what working hard in the store means, what, what sort of jobs did you do in the store?

M: [chuckles] I was a, a butcher, I was, I was doing anything!

B: Well des-, what, describe, su-, describe a typical day.

M: Well, we, when (- -)

B: What would you do when you (- -)

M: The store was over there. When the people come in they want certain stuff. They were, it wasn't a, a, a place that you can, you can get some by yourself, but you got to get them all. (B: Um hm) Uh if they want to come you got to get the thing the very [down]. (B: Um hm) You know. The other one they pick up what they can and they bought it.

B: So they would ask you for cer-, each item, and then you would go and get it.

M: Yeah. Yeah. Then if they want cold cut, you got to cut it; if they want meat, you got to cut it. And sometime what they looking for or they, what they want you got it, but it's not there, you got to go and pick it up. [both talk; interviewer unclear] Sometime open a can down cellar. Uh, I got to go downstairs, open the can, the [case] and bring it up. Oh there was lot of work in this store.

B: So you were on your feet a lot, obviously.

M: But [down], then when we bought this store on this side we make it a real self-service store, with the wagon. People, they get the wagon and go and pick up what they want. Eh (- -)

B: When was that? When did you make it a self-service store?

M: In 1948. (B: 1948; uh huh, uh huh) He's working again that guy. [both chuckle]

B: Yeah, so in 1948 you made it self-service, but prior to that time you probably took the wire and cut the cheese, did you? [Mrs. Marconi laughs] Yeah?

M: Well we had machine to cut everything. (B: Uh huh) We had b-big, uh walk-in ice box. We had an, a big box for the grocery too, walking in there. (B: Um hm, um hm) Lot of vegetable, all kind of vegetable, all kind of fruit. (B: Um hm) Cookies. (B: Um hm) All kind. And all Italian stuff, all kind.

B: What kind of Italian stuff did you have? What was you know, a big seller? [unclear]

M: That's my voice.

B: What kind of, what kind of stuff? [Mrs. Marconi sighs] Give me a name of something.

M: Cheese.

B: Yeah and what (M: [There's]) k-, a particular kind of cheese?

M: S-, salami. (B: Um hm) Spaghetti. Tomatoes.

B: Were there any brand names? [pause: 3 sec.] That comes to mind. What kind of spaghetti? Who made the spaghetti?

M: Oh we bought it from the people (B: Okay) from the big wholesale. (B: Okay)

B: Is there, was it R-Rinoni's, uh (- -)

M: They were in p-, well, Progresso. (B: Progresso; [they're still; okay]) Uum, Napoli. (B: Uh huh) Palermo, you know that was the name of all the Italian where the spaghetti come from. (B: Uh huh, uh huh; okay)

B: When you um, say that all the, the, the canned good come, came in boxes and the vegetables came in boxes and all that, [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Tomatoes and paste, (B: All in boxes) all, all Amer-, (- -)

B: Who lifted the boxes?

M: Me and anybody around.

B: So you would lift them off the sh-, the, the wagon, (M: Yeh) the truck that came. You would lift them from the cellar (M: Ohh) upstairs [both talk; interviewer unclear]

M: Many time. I handle a hundred pound of corn meal, sugar, hundred pound of sugar, hundred pound of corn meal.

[pause: 5 sec.; noise and talking in background; unclear]

B: So, so you w-, you, you developed pretty strong muscles then.

M: And how. (B: Um hm, um hm) I used to cut the meat just like a butcher. (B: Um hm) If the butcher was busy or they want a piece of meat, it, it's not cut, I go in the ice box, bring it out and cut it myself. (B: Um hm, um hm) We had the machine. (B: Um hm, um hm)

B: So your only recreation was the church. (M: The church) On Sundays that would be your time off.

M: [talks at same time] That's [unclear] Sunday would be my, my f-, holiday. [chuckles]
(B: Uh huh) I had to work (B: Uh huh) just the same.

B: Because you had housework then. (M: Unnh) Uh who did all the jobs in the house? Did your husband do any jobs (- -)

M: Oh yeah. They all busy [for all of them].

B: They did carpentry, you said.

M: Ohh, everything, everything, e-, we, we had some for everybody. (B: Um hm, um hm)
The people sometime they coming in in flock you know. Sometime you might be stay an hour without a customer, and then altogether, especially when they come out of their, their, their meal at five o'clock. They know what they need to make suppers and they popped in, they, they fill up the place.

B: So that five o'clock (- -)

M: And we were all busy.

B: At five o'clock to six o'clock would be your busiest hour.

M: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And, and the rest of them, for the order, we call the order and we, lot of them, we go and get the order, and it's a lot of them they didn't, they not all had the telephone like today at that time. You go and get the order, they, you come in, put up the order, deliver, bring it back, and uh (- -) (B: Hm) My husband used to do that as far as he can deliver it. (B: Hm) If it's too heavy or if it's too far, well we had to start the truck. (B: Um hm, um hm) Ooo we get calls to go to Springdale and Willamancit and, uh South Hadley, Fairview, all over. (B: Um hm, um hm) The customer, they used to live on the, on the city. They move once in a while. Some come in, some goes out. And the one they move, they love to trade with us. Yeh. We deliver no matter where they were. (B: Hm) As far as we can uh, (B: Hm) know out of town. (B: Hm) But out of town, we used to go to Westfield. My brother used to go to Westfield, once a week, on Friday. One Friday he bring down the stuff and he take the order for the Friday coming. Every Friday he used to go Westfield with big order. (B: Hm; hm; very good)

B: That would be useful. Nau-, when your husband was sick and he had to st-, rest at home, what did you do? You (- -)

M: Well my, my son, he finished the college, (B: Um hm) and he took over. [both talk; interviewer] He could come over, right over, see?

B: Oh I see. So he helped you out. (M: [That was]) For a little while you were doing both

your (M: Yeah) husband's work (M: Yeah) and your work. (M: Yeah) And taking care of your husband. (M: Yeah)

M: [both talk; interviewer unclear] A good thing I had my mother around. If I didn't have my mother I would (B: Yeah) die myself. (B: Yeah; that's incredible) My mother, she die fifty, 1950 she die. (B: Um hm) She was eighty-seven. (B: Um hm, um hm) Yeah. (B: [A long life]) Yeah. We [all] die old. (B: Hm) Only my sister, she die at sixty-nine. She had a store too, down south Holyoke, spaghetti house. [both talk; unclear] Huh?

B: She just sold spaghetti?

M: Enh, spaghetti and meatball, and,

B: Oh, like a restaurant?

M: Sandwich. Yeah, like a restaurant. (B: Uh huh, uh huh) Cook it, he cooked spaghetti. (B: Uh huh) Make spaghetti [plates]. (B: Uh huh) Yeah, she's still there for ten years or more. (B: Um hm) And so she work hard too in some way or another, I don't know what's happened. (B: Um hm) She die, I was, she was only sixty-nine. (B: Um hm, um hm, um hm) That's [on] the rest of my other fa-, A-Archie's father, he was eighty-eight. My father, he was eighty-two; my mother, eighty-seven; my other sister, eighty-four; and my, my other brother, eighty-five. We were all over eighty, (B: Um hm) something like that. (B: Um hm) I'm the (B: Um hm) [both talk; unclear]

B: [laughs] You're nearly there. Well I want to thank you, Mrs. Marconi, for sharing your life story with us. I (- -)

M: Well tried, (- -)

[tape stops momentarily]

B: Okay we now have uh Mrs. Marconi's sister and niece arrived. Sister used to work in spaghetti house. And they're telling us some stories about how Mary's nephew was born here in the house. So tell me, how, how, you forgot to tell me about how Archie was born.

S: I told you he's born in Apple-, Appleton Street.

B: Yeah, you did. But you didn't tell me he was only a pound when he was born.

S: Oh my goodness! He t-, he, [laughs] that's his story. [laughs]

B: So, so what then? What happened?

S: Well, he's born sh-, [laughs] gee whiz [there], what, why [you work with this thing] [unclear] (- -)

B: Oh no, that's good!

S: No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

B: You tell me.

S: No, no, no. No, no.

Man in background: She doesn't want it, we won't (- -)

Another man: Mary, why don't you tell her (- -)

[several people talk at once]

M: She wants to go to back, get her work, (B: Yeah) she begin to feel bad, (B: Um hm) so she went to bed and she (- -)

B: Shhh-she's, the baby started to come, yeah.

M: She break the water and the baby come. (B: Uh huh) And he was only a [ball] like that. (B: Uh huh)

B: So what'd you do with him?

M: We get a, a pan with the hot water and we put it in, (B: Um hm) and, and he put it in. [makes noise like a crying baby] [unclear] [interviewer chuckles] Oh he say he's alive, he is he. [both laugh]

B: So you and your mother were the doctors.

M: And me and my mother, we had to do everything.

B: You cut the cord.

M: But then uh, uh [unclear] Clark, [water starts running making it difficult to hear] eh, next to our store, it used to be a, a midwife, (B: Um hm) an old lady, a French old lady, a midwife. We, she call, we ca-, we come down, and you see he's all right you see. And she got some cotton and she rolled it up in the cotton, (B: Um hm) and, and he put the di-, diaper around and (- -) (B: Um hm) And then she says, "All right," she says. [She said] (B: Um hm) the breast from the mother, (B: Um hm) milk (B: Um hm) from the mother, (B: Um hm) and give him to the eye dropper.

B: Through an eye dropper.

M: Eye dropper. See? See how he grew?

B: And then he grew, (M: And then he grew) fine strong man. Yeah.

M: He was so bad when he, he was (B: Yeah) crying (B: Yeah) all the time (B: Yeah) at night, (B: Yeah) he would keep everybody awake.

B: That's like you were saying a lot of those traditions were passed on. Like you know, people when they die for example, they didn't, they weren't sent away to a funeral home. Oftentimes you took care of the, the dead body in the house, didn't you? Is that, did you used to do lots of things in the house, or don't, don't do today.

M: Oh no. Oh sure, no. No, now you go to doctor, and you go, you start when you get pregnant, you go to doctor until it's come. (B: Um hm) And there you stay. Maybe now they, they send it back early. But before you in on the hospital they used to keep you at least eight, ten days. (B: Um hm) Now they sick and two day they send them home. If you keep [unclear] (- -)

Man interrupts: Two day, two day they send you home.

M: But they got the care from the start until the last. They know everything is okay. (B: Um hm) And what they can do in the hospital they can do at home. (B: Um hm, um hm, um hm) And that's [why]. (B: Um hm; thank you)

[several people talk and laugh in background]

B: Mary's sister came over. Now they're in the kitchen and they're talking Italian together.

[end of tape]